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To Grill or not to Grill?

September 11, 2008 in [Tales from Taiwan](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [1 comment](#)

Enough of politics! The Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋節; also known as the Moon Festival) is this Sunday, so let's break out a case of Taiwan Beer, and slap some squid and pork patties on the barby.

Well, maybe not...

You see, the government, led by the Environmental Protection Agency (環保署), is encouraging people to refrain from a favorite evening activity, namely the family (or community) barbeque. According to agency estimates, this could help reduce the island's carbon footprint, as [over 6,000 tons](#) of CO₂ would be produced if even one-third of the nation's residents fired up their grills. Subsequently, numerous city and county governments announced their support of the EPA's position by [cancelling their sponsorship](#) of large-scale barbeque events or reducing the amount of public land made available for citizens to use for their cookouts. Other officials have adopted a "[neither forbid nor encourage](#)" (不禁止、不鼓勵), while some village heads and ward chiefs are going ahead with plans to hold small-scale barbeques or reschedule them to after the Moon Festival. A number of citizens have [complained about the EPA](#) policy of "immediate prohibition" (馬上禁絕), arguing that industrial pollution is a much greater threat than an evening of grilling, but the agency has [steadfastly stuck to its position](#).

The past few days have witnessed a spirited debate in the local media about the extent to which the annual family cookout harms the environment, as well as how strictly the state should enforce restrictions on barbequing. The government's attempts to pour cold water on cookouts also sparked [protests](#) on the part of people linked to the local barbeque industry (especially [pig farmers](#)), as their [sales experienced a marked downturn](#). However, some more enterprising supermarkets are now offering [picnic baskets](#) (including some filled with sushi) as a substitute, while others are [stocking up on barbeque necessities](#) (meat, corn, green peppers, etc.) on the assumption that people will grill through the night regardless of what government officials have to say.

So perhaps we can have a cookout after all!

Except that Typhoon Sinlaku is roaring this way, and all festivities may have to be moved indoors...

Note: See also the following [feature article](#) (with the same title!) from the September 13 issue of the *Taipei Times*.